

mental well-being. These reflective moments build self-awareness and foster resilience.

- **Highlight the Real-World Impact:** Emphasize that self-care directly affects clinical effectiveness, patient safety, and career longevity. Citing evidence that regulated, well-rested nurses experience fewer errors and communicate more effectively reinforces the value of self-care as a performance enhancer, not a distraction.
- **Mentor by Example:** Educators must also model the behaviors they promote—taking breaks, setting limits, and communicating transparently about stress and self-care. When leaders visibly prioritize their own well-being, they validate others who choose to do the same.
- **Design Self-Care Spaces and Tools:** Create a quiet, calming rooms within the work environment, furnished with recliners, soft lighting, aromatherapy, and mindfulness tools. These spaces provide a break from the demands of clinical care. Educators often partner with leadership and facilities to create and promote these spaces, highlighting them during round- ing or staff orientation.
- **Provide Code Lavender Bins:** Strategically place kits containing stress-relief tools such as fidget items, lavender lotion, handheld massagers, and mindfulness prompts in the work environment. These bins offer quick, accessible coping tools and are maintained by educators as part of broader wellness initiatives.
- **Integrate Fun into the Workday:** Nursing is mentally and emotionally taxing. Small, purposeful opportunities for mental reset and team connection through education games or activities on the unit can make a difference.
- **Deliver Self-Care Giveaways and Themed Events:** Schedule events throughout the year—particularly during Nurse's Week, seasonal transitions, or awareness months. These events provide staff with wellness items such as tea kits, coloring books, and mindfulness tools. Such initiatives send the message that rest and self-care are valued year-round, not only during special occasions.
- **Embed Self-Care in Orientation and Ongoing Education:** The foundation for a healthy practice begins at the start of a nurse's professional journey. Embed- ding wellness education into orientation

ensures new nurses understand that self-care is integral to professional success.

By integrating these strategies into educational frameworks, daily routines, and unit culture, nurse educators help cultivate a professional environment where self-care is not an afterthought—but a necessary and respected part of nursing practice.

Conclusion

The nursing profession stands at a critical juncture. The longstanding culture of self-neglect is no longer tenable in the face of escalating burnout and workforce attrition. By reframing self-care as a professional imperative and implementing practical strategies to support nurse well-being, we can foster a more sustainable, compassionate, and effective healthcare system. It is time to prioritize the caregivers, ensuring that they have the support and resources needed to thrive in their vital roles. ■

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myamericannurse.com/?p=419646

A Day in the Life of Nurse Residents

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As Post-Baccalaureate Registered Nurse Residents (PBRNR) employed by the Veterans Administration (VA) Medical Center, we entered this 12-month residency program with no prior registered nurse (RN) experience. During our time in the program, we have been certified in: Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS), Basic Life Support (BLS) Mental Health First Aid, Out of Operating Room Airway Management (OORAM), Lean Six Sigma White Belt, Collaborative Institutional Training

Initiative (CITI), and American Association of Critical Care Nurses (AACN) Essentials of ECG and Dysrhythmia Monitoring (EDM). In addition, we are active participants in shared governance committees such as the nursing leadership council, nursing research council, quality improvement, and patient education, etc. Outside of our work obligations, we are also active members of nursing organizations.

New graduate nurses face various challenges when transitioning to practice, as

noted by National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) (2025). They experience increased stress levels, and the complexity of patients often leads to errors. Approximately one-fourth of new nurses leave during their first year of practice. However, the NCSBN (2025) has reported that organizations incorporating a nurse residency program have lower attrition rates. Our residency allows us to feel fully supported as we embark on our nursing journey and, by learning and improving

our patient care under safe supervision and guidance, our stress is relieved, facilitating clinical growth.

A central tenet of PBRNR is continued education. During our residency, we utilize didactic days to complete simulations, presentations, and online modules, building upon our existing knowledge. We also complete various projects, including evidence-based practice and quality improvement initiatives, and disseminate our findings via poster, presentation, or manuscript. Another central tenet is well-rounded professional nursing practice. We spend at least two weeks on most hospital units, including medical-surgical, long-term care, mental health, intensive care units, and specialties such as interventional radiology and the operating room.

The PBRNR program distinguishes itself through its comprehensive exposure across most units and specialties in the VA

Medical Center. This immersive program provides hands-on RN experience with a diverse patient population, exposing residents to unit-specific patient conditions, care plans, nursing assignments, and expectations. The program's blend of clinical and didactic days, coupled with a flexible schedule for gaining experience in chosen areas, creates abundant learning opportunities. With protected time, the program fosters an environment for optimal learning, significantly promoting resident success. Ultimately, these unique features contribute to more holistic approach to patient care and safety, cultivating increased confidence in practice, improved time management, and a wealth of knowledge that leads to proactive critical thinking.

Advice for New Nurses

For new nurses considering a residency, our advice is to strategically use your time

in the program to discern your preferences. When it's time to choose a permanent placement, remember to advocate for yourself and your career aspirations. Don't hesitate to ask questions, and view mistakes not as failures, but as learning opportunities. Most importantly, prioritize finding a healthcare organization that aligns with your values and genuinely appreciates your time and continued professional development. A strong cultural fit can significantly enhance your career satisfaction and long-term success. ■

Disclaimer: The content of this article is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the U.S. Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA), U.S. Government and Department of Veterans Affairs.

References

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